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Secretariat

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INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff at Headquarters
Members of permanent missions to the United Nations

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMME -
ACADEMIC YEAR 1991/92

1. Language training courses in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are organized in order to promote linguistic balance within the Secretariat as mandated by General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII) of 21 December 1968. The purpose of these courses is to provide staff members with the opportunity to achieve proficiency in other official languages, bearing in mind their needs and their office hours. The United Nations language proficiency examination is the official test of a staff member's knowledge of a language and may be taken both by participants who have completed the last level of a language course and by staff members who have achieved proficiency from outside sources.

I. ELIGIBILITY

2. (a) All staff members who have appointments for at least six months beyond the deadline of the registration period for the term in question may register for language courses. Priority for admission is given to staff members; members of permanent missions to the United Nations will be admitted as space permits. Applications from other categories of non-staff members (consultants, staff of non-governmental organizations, press correspondents accredited to the United Nations and staff of other organizations of the common system) will be considered in the light of available resources (see para. 6 below for information on fees);

(b) Consular staff, spouses and children of staff members and personnel from permanent missions and consulates are not admitted to United Nations language courses. However, the Hospitality Committee for United Nations

delegations offers courses for spouses of staff members, for spouses of members of missions and for consular staff. Further information about these courses may be obtained from Mr. Frank Werth, Hospitality Committee Language School, General Assembly Building, room 101, tel. (212) 755-1685.

II. REGISTRATION

Procedure

3. (a) New participants in the programme may register for a language course by filling out a registration form, which may be obtained from the Language Training Programme, room S-606, during the established registration period and returning it to the same room before the published deadline. Those who have some prior knowledge of the language they wish to study must make an appointment for a placement test at the time of registration;

(b) Once registered in a language course, participants will be given an opportunity in class before the end-of-term examination to renew their registration for regular courses in subsequent terms. Participants who fail to re-register at that time will be dropped from the programme unless they have submitted a written explanation of their special circumstances to the appropriate language coordinator;

(c) All those who wish to participate in conversation classes or other special courses, such as the Guided Self Study Workshop or the Oral Skills Workshop, must fill out the appropriate registration form, which may be obtained in room S-606 during the registration period;

(d) Returning participants who have been absent from a course of study for two terms or more will be required to take a placement test in order to re-enrol in the programme;

(e) Registration for the first term of academic year 1991/92 is scheduled to take place from 26 August to 6 September 1991 from 1 to 3 p.m. in room S-606.

Registration for the second and third terms will take place in November 1991 and March 1992. The exact dates will be announced during the month preceding the registration period.

Language of study

4. Prospective participants should exercise particular care in choosing the language in which they wish to take either a regular or an accelerated course, for they may register for only one such course each term and may not interrupt a course of study in one language in order to begin studying another without the authorization of the Training Service.

Notification of enrolment

5. Staff members and other participants whose registration is current or who have registered within the established registration period should check the class lists, which will be posted on the sixth floor of the Secretariat building and on the second floor of UNDC-2 building during the week before the beginning of each term.

Tuition fees

6. (a) Members of the United Nations Secretariat and staff of other organizations of the common system are admitted to regular and accelerated language courses free of charge. Tuition fees of $150 per term for each regular or accelerated course are payable by non-staff members as referred to in paragraph 2 (a) above. In accordance with section XVII of General Assembly resolution 36/235 of 18 December 1981, accredited (diplomatic) staff of permanent missions at Headquarters may enrol free of charge in regular and accelerated lanaguage courses during the established registration periods. All other staff of permanent missions (administrative, technical and service) will be charged the standard fee. No tuition fees will be refunded after the second week of classes;

(b) Tuition fees of $50 per term for each special course, such as conversation, the Oral Skills Workshop, etc., are payable by non-staff members as referred to in paragraph 2 (a) above;

(c) Any participant who repeats a regular or accelerated course at any level will be charged the standard fee; however, the fee will not be chargeable to participants who need to repeat a course as a result of absences of three weeks or more attributable either to certified sick leave or to a mission assignment of which they were unaware at the time they enrolled in the course. Participants who have been assigned to mission service must provide written notification from their executive/administrative officer or, in the case of mission personnel, their supervisor, giving particulars of the dates and duration of the assignment.

III. COURSE CALENDAR

7. The 1991/92 course calendar is as follows:

(a) First term of 1991/92

Language classes:	16 September-6 December 1991
End-of-term examinations:	9-13 December 1991

(b) Second term of 1991/92

Language classes:	6 January-27 March 1992
End-of-term examinations:	30 March-3 April 1992

(c) Third term of 1991/92

Language classes: 20 April-10 July 1992
End-of-term examinations: 13-17 July 1992

IV. DESCRIPTION OF LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME

8. Four types of courses are offered each term: regular, accelerated, conversation and language study workshops. The Training Service also designs and conducts special language training courses to meet specific language needs of departments.

9. (a) Depending on the level, regular courses meet for one-hour periods, three or four times a week, with the lower levels receiving extra laboratory work each week, starting in the second week of the term;

(b) Classes are offered at the following times:

Before work: 8.30 a.m.

Lunch hour: 12 p.m.
1 p.m.
2 p.m.

After work: 5.45 p.m. (6.15 p.m. during the General Assembly session)

It should be noted that not all levels of a given language are offered at each of these times. Draft schedules, available in room S-606, should be consulted at the time of registration. Every effort will be made to place registrants according to the time preferences they indicate; however, because the number of places in lunch-hour courses is limited, there is no guarantee that registrants will be given the time they have chosen.

Accelerated courses

10. Accelerated courses are offered as an intensive alternative to the regular programme. Classes meet five days a week from 9.15 to 10.15 a.m. Written authorization is required for staff members wishing to take such courses. This authorization must be renewed each time the staff member re-registers for an accelerated course.

Conversation courses

11. Conversation courses are provided for staff members who have passed the language proficiency examination or who have a sufficiently advanced knowledge of the language. Those enrolled in the upper four levels of a language programme are also eligible to participate. The purpose of these courses is to develop oral expression and to supplement the instruction provided in the

other courses. Conversation classes meet for either one or two hours before or after work.

V. LANGUAGE STUDY WORKSHOPS

Guided self-study workshops

12. Guided self-study workshops in English and in French are offered to staff members who wish to develop a means of maintaining or improving their language skills on their own. With guidance from the workshop teacher, participants will develop a greater awareness of their personal language learning strategies, try out new ones and use those which are most effective for them. These workshops generally meet for one hour a week.

Oral skills workshop

13. The oral skills workshop in English is offered to staff members who wish to focus on improving their English pronunciation. There are two sessions a week, of one hour each, including practice in the language laboratory under the guidance of the workshop teacher.

Advanced writing

14. Advanced writing workshops in the working languages of the Secretariat at Headquarters, English and French, are available to those staff members who have passed the language proficiency examination and whose function requires them to write. The objective of these courses is to develop the participants' ability to write clearly, concisely and correctly, using the style appropriate to United Nations letters and memoranda. The workshops generally meet from 3 to 5 p.m. one day a week. Staff members wishing to take such courses must have written authorization.

VI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Lunch-hour attendance of language courses

15. Staff members attending classes during their lunch hour are allowed 20 minutes for a quick meal before resuming their work.

Language laboratory

16. The Training Service operates a language laboratory (UNDC-2, room 203), consisting of a teaching laboratory and a laboratory for individual study. The hours during which the language laboratory is open are posted on the bulletin board on the second floor of the UNDC-2 building at the beginning of each term.

Absenteeism

17. Participants who fail to attend class during the first week of the term will automatically be dropped from the class list, and their places may be allotted to persons on the waiting list. Absences from class should be explained in writing to the appropriate language coordinator.

Course materials

18. Participants will be informed on the first day of class of the materials which will be used during the course. It should be noted that course materials produced by the Training Service are intended for use exclusively by participants in the language courses offered by that Service.

Examinations

19. (a) Examination schedules are posted during the last month of classes. Examinations are an integral part of the teaching programme, and it is mandatory to take them. Participants who do not sit for the end-of-term examination will be dropped from the programme unless they have submitted adequate written explanation to the appropriate coordinator in advance of their absence;

(b) Participants who are prevented by compelling circumstances from taking the examination as scheduled and who wish to request a make-up examination should write a memorandum to the coordinator of the language they are studying. Those who are authorized will be notified of the exact date of the make-up examination;

(c) Examinations are given after the last week of classes for regular and accelerated courses to determine whether a participant will pass to a higher level or repeat the course. The examinations consist of written and oral components, both of which must be passed to enable a participant to go on to the next level. Participants who fail a course may arrange to have a general discussion of the results of their examination by making an appointment with the appropriate language coordinator one week after the beginning of a term;

(d) The language proficiency examination is given twice in every calendar year. This examination is the official test of a staff member's knowledge of a language. The examination is open to all students who have completed the last level of a United Nations language course and to staff members who have achieved proficiency from outside sources. Application to take this examination must be made separately. Further details are given in information circular ST/IC/1990/83. It should be noted that there are no make-up examinations for the language proficiency examination.

Cancellation of registration

20. Students who believe that they will be unable to complete the course in which they are enrolled and wish to withdraw must do so by completing the change-of-registration form in room S-606 within the first two weeks of the term. If these students wish to re-register for the same course in a subsequent term, they must come in person to room S-606 during the announced registration period to complete the necessary registration forms; those who cancel their registration after this two-week period will be considered repeaters if they re-register for the same course and will therefore be required to pay the standard fee.

Extensions to call for information

21. General information: ext. 3.7021

Language laboratory: ext. 3.2482

Language proficiency examinations: ext. 3.9503 or 3.7021

Pedagogical inquiries and appointments with coordinators:

Arabic: ext. 3.9506
Chinese: ext. 3.2481
English: ext. 3.9502
French: ext. 3.7019
Russian: ext. 3.7027
Spanish: ext. 3.7026

Teachers' room: ext. 3.5155

Staff members who wish to consult a coordinator should telephone in advance for an appointment.